29. For an assessment of the different character of the interpretations of the story in these two paintings see Bal 1991, 105–108.

30. I would like to thank Ernst van de Wetering for sharing with me his observations about these areas when he examined the painting in 1989.

31. The overly dramatic gesture of Joseph as he looks heavenward is quite uncharacteristic for Rembrandt in the mid-1650s. It is a gesture, however, that does appear in Willem Drost's drawing of *The Lament for Abel* (see Sumowski 1979–1992, 3: 1204, no. 553[x], repro.). This coincidence, as well as the relatively bold brushwork with thick impastos, which relates to Drost's known works, suggests that he may have been responsible for the Berlin version.

32. For an analysis of Renesse's style and biographical information on the artist, see *The Descent from the Cross* (pp. 301–309).

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1909 Wrangell: xxix, 121, repro.
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1934 Chicago: no. 105.
1935 Amsterdam: no. 17.
1935 Bredius: 24, 523, repro. (also 1936 English ed.: 24, 523, repro.).
1935 Chamot: 199–205, repro.
1935 Rich: 3–5, repro.
1935 Scharf: 247–255.
1941 NGA: 31, no. 79, repro.
1943 Benesch: 20–33, fig. 8 (also reprint in Benesch 1970, 1: 140–146, fig. 69).
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1960 Roger-Marx: 72–73, 280.
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1968 Gerson: 114, 116, 362–363, repro., 499.
1969 Gerson/Bredius: 432, repro., 601.
1969 Washington: no. 13.
1970 Benesch, in Benesch 1970, 1: 83–100, fig. 69.
1973 Kauffmann, in Simson and Kelch 1973: 50–57, repro. 14.
1973 Klessmann, in Simson and Kelch 1973: 44–49.
1974 Potterton: 268–273.
1975 NGA: 286–287, repro.
1976 Walker: 280, no. 371, repro.
1977 Bolten and Bolten-Rempt: 196, no. 437, repro.
1980 Washington: no. 28.
1984/1985 Schwartz: 275, color repro. (also 1985 English ed.: 274–275, color repro.).
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1985 NGA: 330 repro.
1986 Tümpel: 419, A2.
1986 Sutton: 312.
1991 Bal: 34–39, 43, 46–48, 105–108, 117, 123, 140, 199, 217, 405 note 24, 451 note 13, repros. 1.2, 1.7, 3.4.
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1992 NGA: 131, color repro.
1994 Münster: no. 252.

1937.1.75 (75)

Rembrandt Workshop

A Woman Holding a Pink

1656
Oil on canvas, 102.9 x 86 (40½ x 33⅞)
Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Inscriptions
At upper right: *Rembrandt. f.1656*

Technical Notes: The support, a tightly woven, fine-weight fabric, has been lined with the tacking margins trimmed. Cusping is visible along all edges in the x-radiograph, indicating the original dimensions have been retained. The thick complex ground appears to consist of four layers, a dark brown layer followed by a yellow layer, and again a brown layer followed by a yellow one.[1]

Thin paint layers were applied in paste consistency, worked both wet into wet and wet on wet with low brush-marking. The background layer extends under the figure,

which was initially sketched in broad brushstrokes. The hands, face, and tablecloth are thickly painted and finished with transparent glazes. Some texture has been lost by lining. Scattered minor losses have been retouched as have losses along the edges. The background and scattered areas of the figure are moderately abraded. The varnish layers are pigmented uniformly. Minor consolidation and inpainting were carried out in 1942 and 1957; no major treatment has been necessary since acquisition.

Provenance: Pierre Crozat [1665–1740], Paris, before 1740; by inheritance to his nephew Louis-François Crozat, Marquis du Châtel [1691–1750], Paris; by inheritance to his brother Louis-Antoine Crozat, Baron de Thiers [1699–1770], Paris; sold by estate in 1772 to Catherine II, empress of Russia [1729–1796]; Imperial Hermitage Gallery, Saint Petersburg; sold March 1931 through (Matthiesen Gallery, Berlin; P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., London; and M. Knoedler & Co., New York) to Andrew W. Mellon, Pittsburgh and Washington; deeded 30 March 1932 to The A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh.

Exhibited: Washington 1969, no. 16.

In writing about Rembrandt's classicism of the mid-1650s, Sir Kenneth Clark juxtaposed illustrations of *A Woman Holding a Pink* and Rembrandt's 1658 *Self-Portrait* in the Frick Collection (fig. 1).[2]

Fig. 1. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait*, 1658, oil on canvas, Frick Collection, New York

The comparison is striking, for the nobility of both figures has much to do with their frontal poses and direct gazes. Whether or not the foundation of Rembrandt's classicism of the mid-1650s derives from Titian, as Clark maintained, there is no question that Rembrandt increasingly sought to capture the essence of a sitter's presence by means of the triangular geometry of a frontal, seated pose.

The simplicity of concept, the forcefulness of execution, and the nobility of character of *A Woman Holding a Pink* are qualities that have been consistently admired in the literature. Despite its undeniable quality and its clear relationship to Rembrandt's portrait style of the mid-1650s, however, recent scholars have speculated that *A Woman Holding a Pink* may have been executed by an artist trained by Rembrandt rather than by the master himself. The essential issue is one of connoisseurship: is the manner in which the figure is painted sufficiently consistent with Rembrandt's own technique to warrant an attribution to the master?

The first art historian to question the attribution was Horst Gerson in 1969. He did not believe the signature and date were authentic, and wrote about the painting: "Its solid structure combined with a smooth surface, however, are more characteristic of the school of Rembrandt than of the master himself. It could be a work of Bol or Maes."[3] Gerson's comments are rather cursory, but his general observation about the manner of execution in the painting has much validity. A more essential difference than the relative smoothness of the paint, however, is the absence of accents that firmly articulate features and help characterize the personality of the sitter. While the woman's face is carefully modeled, her features are not formed with bold strokes of the brush, as one would expect of Rembrandt's touch, but with a number of superimposed strokes. The relatively soft modeling of form that results from this manner of painting is also evident in the x-radiograph of the head, where concentrations of lead white can be seen but few individual brushstrokes are visible (fig. 2). A similar manner of painting was used to delineate the hands. The limitations of this technique for articulating form are particularly evident in the rather undefined structure of the left hand.

Although it seems improbable that the artist responsible for executing this fine work was either Nicolaes Maes (q.v.) or Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680), as Gerson has suggested, he may well have been correct to associate this work with the relatively smooth portrait style of a Rembrandt pupil who like those artists originated from Dordrecht.[4] Comparisons with the work of yet another Dordrecht artist

Rembrandt Workshop, *A Woman Holding a Pink*, 1937.1.75

who came to study under Rembrandt, Jacobus Leveck (1634–1675), provide striking parallels in artistic concept and painterly technique. Leveck is identified as a student of Rembrandt in a document dated 16 September 1653, when he and another pupil (*dissipelen*) acted as witnesses for Rembrandt.[5] Houbraken, who later briefly studied with Leveck in Dordrecht, not only mentions that Leveck had studied under Rembrandt, he also writes that "[Leveck] still had a painting in his house from his first period in which Rembrandt's handling was so truthfully done that one would have taken it for a work of Rembrandt."[6] This "first period" must have lasted at least until 1655, the year Leveck entered the Saint Luke's Guild in Dordrecht. Nothing certain, however, is known about Leveck's stylistic evolution during the latter half of the 1650s. While he and Maes, who had returned to Dordrecht from Rembrandt's workshop in 1654, became important portrait painters in that city, it is possible that Leveck maintained his contact with Rembrandt during these years. Only in 1660, after a trip to France, did his style radically shift away from Rembrandt's manner.[7]

Leveck's oeuvre is small. Only sixteen paintings are attributed to him, and of these only eight are signed.[9] The earliest signed and dated painting, *Portrait of a Nineteen-Year-Old Boy* of 1654 (fig. 3), suggests that from the outset of his career Leveck favored a frontal pose in which the sitter stares directly out at the viewer. He illuminated the youth with a strong light source from the left and modeled his form with relatively thick paint, but the flesh tones appear quite smooth. Just as in *A Woman Holding a Pink*, the lips are depicted as being very full, and the form of the upper lip is distinctly articulated.

A second comparison can be made with an unsigned work convincingly attributed to Leveck, *Portrait of a Gentleman Holding a Pair of Gloves in His Left Hand*.[9] Although this painting, which has been dated between 1655 and 1660 by Sumowski, is not as assured as *A Woman Holding a Pink*, the sitter's frontal pose and direct gaze create a forceful impression. The paint in the flesh tones is thickly applied in a manner similar to that of *A Woman Holding a Pink*. In the left hand of both sitters, for example, modeling is achieved with diagonal strokes that run from left to right. In each instance impastos overlay a thin, light brown layer that is left visible to provide the flesh tone for the tips of the fingers, which are bent and in shadow.

Should *A Woman Holding a Pink* have been executed by Leveck or another as yet unidentified artist associated with Rembrandt, how does one account for the imposing character of the portrait that has so struck writers over the years, or the signature and date that read "*Rembrandt. / f.1656*"? Contrary to Gerson's skeptical assessment of the signature's authenticity, technical examination provides no evidence that it is a later addition.[10] While it is virtually impossible to determine if the signature is contemporaneous with the rest of the painting, the character of the letters in Rembrandt's name is consistent enough with those in other Rembrandt signatures of the mid-1650s.[11] The date, moreover, is perfectly appropriate for the simple, unadorned character of the woman's costume.[12] Thus while stylistic comparisons make it unlikely that Rembrandt executed this work, there seems little doubt that *A Woman Holding a Pink* originated in his workshop. The high quality of this work makes it probable that Rembrandt was in some way or another involved in its creation and execution. As with the *Man in Oriental Costume* (1940.1.13), he may have helped compose the portrait, perhaps by blocking in its form, but no evidence of his hand in the final image can be detected.

The pink carnation held by the woman has a long history associating it with the sacrament of marriage, and it is often symbolic of a marriage or betrothal.[13] Although allusions to a marriage or be-

Fig. 2. X-radiograph of head in 1937.1.75

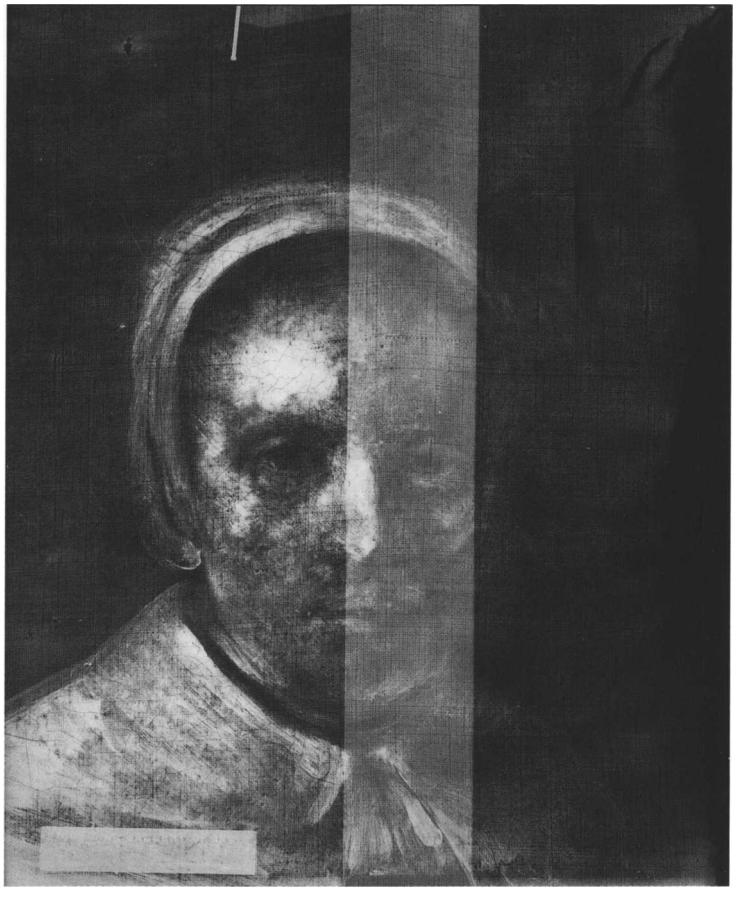

Fig. 3. Jacobus Leveck, *Portrait of a Nineteen-Year-Old Boy*, 1654, oil on panel, Surrey, Polesden Lacey, National Trust, © National Trust 1991

trothal may be the reason for its inclusion in this portrait, such an interpretation seems unlikely as no reinforcing marriage symbolism is present. The carnation, however, which in Dutch is called *nagelbloem* [nailflower], is also associated with Christ's Crucifixion.[14] Thus the carnation, when found in family portraits, alludes to the fact that true conjugal love finds as its inspiration the example of Divine love provided by Christ's Passion. The carnation in this painting may well have such a meaning if one assumes that it is symbolically related to the still life on the tabletop to the woman's left. The book probably represents the Bible and the apples, the legacy of original sin that the woman must strive to overcome through her faith.

Notes

1. This determination has been made through microscopic examination. No cross-sections or pigment analyses of the ground or paint layers have been made.

2. Clark 1966, 127–130, fig. 120.

3. Gerson/Bredius 1969, 581, no. 390.

4. Bruyn 1991, 89, note 84, associated *A Woman Holding a Pink* with a portrait of a woman by Abraham van Dijck (1636–1672), signed and dated 1655 (fig. 101 in this essay, presently in the collection of Dr. Alfred Bader, Milwaukee). Besides the frontal pose of the woman, however, there seems little stylistic relationship between these two works.

5. Strauss and Van der Meulen 1979, 305, doc. 1653/16. The document concerns Rembrandt's appearance before a notary in Amsterdam to authenticate a painting by Paulus Bril (1554–1626).

6. Houbraken 1753, 2: 153. "Hy hadde nog een stuk schildery van zyn eersten tyd in zyn huis, daar de handeling van Rembrant zoo wel in was waargenomen, dat men het voor een stuk van Rembrant zou hebben aangezien."

7. Houbraken 1753, 2: 153, writes that, at this stage of his career, Leveck began painting in a style similar to that of Jan de Baan (1633–1702).

8. Fifteen of these paintings are included in Sumowski 1983, 3: 1746–1747. For a further discussion of Leveck, see Dordrecht 1992, 220–225.

9. *Portrait of a Gentleman Holding a Pair of Gloves in His Left Hand* (art market, The Hague), attributed to Leveck by Sumowski, was included in The Hague 1992, 212, cat. 27; Dordrecht 1992, 221–222, repro.

10. The strong probability that the signature and date were applied at the time the painting was executed would seem to exclude the possibility that this work was executed by Leveck, since he had joined the Saint Luke's Guild in Dordrecht in 1655. One could hypothesize, however, that Leveck executed the portrait in Rembrandt's workshop before he left for Dordrecht, presumably in 1655, and that Rembrandt signed and dated it the following year.

11. The signature, for example, conforms in most respects to Rembrandt's *Jacob Blessing the Children of Joseph*, 1656 (Gemäldegalerie, Kassel, inv. no. 249). In this comparison only the *B* with its upper loop differs from the signature in the Kassel painting.

12. See Van de Watering 1976–1977, 38. Van de Watering emphasizes that, except for elderly or particularly conservative women, fashion began to change shortly after 1655–1656.

13. Mercier 1937, 233–236.

14. Koch 1964, 70–77.

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1838 Hermitage: 122, no. 10.

1863 De Köhne: 169, no. 819 (also 1870 2nd ed., 2: 139, no. 819; 1895 3rd rev. ed., A. Somof, 2: 289, no. 819; and 1901 ed., 2: 325, no. 819).

1864 Waagen: 183.

1868 Vosmaer: 489.

1872 Massaloff: 75, engraved repro. 29.

1879 De Ris: 377–388.

1883 Bode: 602, no. 341.

1885 Dutuit: 39, 63, 69, no. 328.

1886 Wurzbach: 88, no. 414.

1893 Michel, 2: 97–98, 246, no. 819 (also 1894 English trans., 2: 97–98, 246, no. 819).

1897–1906 Bode, 6 (1901): 22, 138, no. 453, repro.

1899 Bell: 181, no. 819, 189 (also 1907 ed.: 152, no. 819).

1902 Neumann: 430–431, repro. 104 (also 1922 ed.: 125).

1906 Rosenberg: 310, repro., 403, no. 310 (also 1908 and 1909 eds.: 439, repro., 563, no. 439).

1907–1927 HdG, 6 (1916): 402, no. 878.
1909 Wrangell: xxx, 129, repro.
1919 Bode: 30, repro.
1921b Valentiner: 439, repro.
1923 Meldrum: 138–139, 200, no. 359.
1923 Weiner: 148, repro. (German ed.).
1935 Bredius: 16, 390, repro. (also 1936 English trans.: 16, 390, repro.).
1941 NGA: 165, no. 75.
1943 Benesch: 20–33, repro.
1949 Mellon: 86, no. 75, repro.
1960 Roger Marx: 65, 305, no. 131, repro.
1965 NGA: 109, no. 75.
1966 Bauch: 26, no. 515., repro.
1966 Clark: 127–130, fig. 120.
1968 Stuffmann: 11–143, no. 372, repro.
1968 NGA: 96, no. 75, repro.
1969 Walker: 26, no. 16.
1969 Gerson/Bredius: 304 repro., 581, no. 390.
1969 Washington: no. 16.
1974 Slive: 113.
1975 Walker: 279, no. 367.
1975 NGA: 284, no. 75, repro.
1976–1977 Van de Watering: 33–41, fig. 3.
1977 Bolten and Bolten-Rempt: 197, no. 452, repro.
1985 NGA: 329, repro.

1956.1.1 (1443)

Follower of Rembrandt van Rijn

Old Woman Plucking a Fowl

1650/1655
Oil on canvas, 133 x 104.7 (52⅜ x 41¼)
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Walter Timme

Technical Notes: The medium-weight, plain-weave fabric support consists of two pieces seamed vertically at the left. It has been lined with the tacking margins trimmed. Diagonal marks from a tool used to apply the thick white ground are visible in the x-radiograph. Paint is applied both thickly and thinly in dry opaque pastes, with colored glazes applied over lighter base tones. Dry brushstrokes of varying length create impasto in light areas, such as the feathers. Extensive glazing is employed in dark passages to model forms and shadows, and impart a dark, glowing appearance.

Thin paint layers and glazes, particularly in dark passages, are severely abraded and covered by discolored retouching. The extent of repaint is difficult to determine precisely due to the heavy, discolored surface coating. Other than a relining and a layer of varnish applied in 1957, the painting has not been treated since acquisition (see text for discussion of restorations undertaken prior to acquisition by the National Gallery).

Provenance: Possibly Willem Six, Amsterdam; (possibly sale, Amsterdam, 12 May 1734, no. 170); possibly Wilkins. Possibly John(?) Blackwood; (possibly sale, England, 1752, no. 70).[1] Francis Charteris, Earl of Wemyss [1723–1808]; Ralph Willett [1719–1795], Great Canford, Dorset; bequeathed to his cousin, John Willett Adye [d. 1815], who later assumed surname Willett in lieu of Adye; (sale, Peter Coxe & Co., London, 31 May 1813, no. 62, bought in); (sale, Christie's, London, 8 April 1819, no. 124); Anthony Stewart [1773–1846], London; Andrew Geddes [1789–1844], London; (sale, London, 12 April 1845, no. 646, bought in); by inheritance to Mrs. Andrew Geddes. Baron de Beurnonville; (sale, Chevallier, Paris, 3 June 1884, no. 295). Madame Levaigneur; (sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 2–4 May 1912, no. 24). (F. Kleinberger & Co., Paris and New York);[2] (sale, American Art Association, New York, 18 November 1932, no. 50); (L. J. Marion); Dr. and Mrs. Walter Timme.

Exhibited: British Institution, London, 1861, no. 17. *Paintings by Rembrandt*, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1930, no. 31.

THE EARLY HISTORY of *Old Woman Plucking a Fowl* is not known with certainty. Traditionally this painting has been associated with a work listed in the 1734 sale of paintings owned by Willem Six, where "Een Hoenderwyf, van Rembrant" was purchased by Wilkins for 165 fl. (see provenance).[3] Wilkins may have brought it to England, for a "*woman plucking a fowl*" by Rembrandt appeared in the Blackwood sale of 1757.[4] The first secure reference to the painting is from the mid-eighteenth century when Richard Houston (c. 1721–1775) made his mezzotint with an inscription indicating that the painting was in the collection of Francis Charteris, Earl of Wemyss (1723–1808) (fig. 1).[5]

Viewed today, no one would for a moment confuse this painting with a work by Rembrandt; yet an attribution to the master was strongly defended when it surfaced in a Paris sale in 1912. The painting had previously only been known to the most important Rembrandt scholars of the day, Wilhelm von Bode, Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, and Abraham Bredius, through reproductive mezzotints, among them the one made by Houston. The painting's appearance generated much interest, and it was acquired by the Paris dealer Francis Kleinberger for a substantial price. Of the three scholars mentioned above, only Bredius demurred about the attribution, arguing that the painting was a workshop production, one of those paintings listed in Rembrandt's 1656 inventory as being retouched by Rembrandt.[6] He wrote that the woman "with the strange wrinkles above her left eye and underneath her right eye, with the monotonously painted fur coat and the oddly-shaped hands," had nothing to do with Rembrandt, but that the fowl was by the master. "You feel his genius in the light he gave to its wings and how the touches in its head make it perfect."

Bredius' comments initiated an exchange of letters in the *Burlington Magazine* with Kleinberger,